

WASHINGTON (28 September) - U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and Chair of the Veterans' Affairs Task Force for the Republican Policy Committee, today lauded the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) decision to issue checks to students awaiting education benefits as part of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

"It is critical that we honor the commitment we have made to our service men and women, and I'm pleased that the Department has issued this emergency funding to carry eligible veterans through until their applications are processed," said Bilirakis. "Veterans should not be placed in the awkward position of having to scrape together money to pay for benefits they have earned."

According to the VA more than 50,000 veterans and their relatives have given notice that they are enrolled in college for the fall semester and are hoping to be receiving payments for tuition, housing and books under the program. To date roughly 27,000 students have received benefits, leaving nearly half of eligible veterans responsible for living and education expenses until they receive reimbursement.

The VA has authorized checks for up to \$3,000 to be given to students who have applied for education benefits and who have not yet received payments for tuition, housing and books as part of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Starting Friday, Oct. 2, 2009, students can go to one of VA's 57 regional benefit offices with a photo ID, a course schedule and an eligibility certificate to request advance payment of their housing and book allowance. The VA also expects to send representatives to schools with large Veteran-student bodies and work with Veteran Service Organizations to assist students in this process.

A list of VA regional offices is available at www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp

For more information on the Post-9/11 GI Bill visit <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>